



RULES FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

City Council meetings are where the Council conducts the important and necessary business of the City. To provide for the orderly conduct of its meetings and hearings, the Council has adopted the following rules to guide the comments and participation of members of the public while in Council Chambers:

- **Please follow the directions of the Presiding Officer.**
- **You may participate in Council discussion and debate only when invited and/or formally recognized by the Presiding Officer.**
- **After being recognized to speak, you are limited to three (3) minutes for comment. Please avoid repeating others' comments.**
- **You must first sign up to speak and provide your name, address, and a brief summary of your comment topic. The sign-up sheet will be available at the start of the Council meeting.**
- **Please direct your remarks to the Presiding Officer. Do not speak to individual council members unless responding to a question.**
- **Please do not interrupt or interfere with the Council meeting. A disruptive member of the public may be removed from the building.**
- **Do not use obscene, profane, or threatening language.**

This pamphlet provides a full explanation of the rules for public comment as set forth in the [Handbook Of The Aberdeen City Council](#).



RULES FOR PUBLIC COMMENT AT MEETINGS AND HEARINGS OF THE ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

THE OPEN MEETINGS LAW

Openness. The South Dakota Open Meetings Law (SDCL Ch. 1-25) requires that all meetings of the Aberdeen City Council be open to the public, with the exception of closed meetings/executive sessions. This presumption of openness serves three basic purposes:

1. To prohibit actions from being taken in secret where it is impossible for the interested public to become fully informed concerning decisions of the Council.
2. To ensure the public's right to be informed.
3. To afford the public an opportunity to present its views to the Council.

Citizen access. The Council views providing and encouraging citizen access to City meetings as one of its most important duties. As a result, all Council meetings, except closed meetings/executive sessions, shall be open to the public.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Limited public participation and comment at Council meetings. City Council meetings are the forum for the Council to conduct the important and necessary business of the City. While Council meetings are generally open to the public, the meetings are a *limited forum for public expression*. This means that members of the public are not allowed to participate in Council discussion and debate without a specific invitation and/or formal recognition by the presiding officer.

Disrupting proceedings prohibited. Members of the public may not engage in behavior through sound, words, or action that interrupts or interferes with the Council meeting. Disorderly, disruptive, disturbing, delaying, or boisterous sounds, words, or actions include:

- Handclapping;
- Stomping of feet;
- Whistling;
- Making noise;
- Use or display of profane or obscene language, images, or gestures;
- Talking out loud, yelling, or similar demonstrations;
- Personal attacks or threats on others; and
- Any other conduct which substantially interrupts, delays, or disturbs the peace and good order of the proceedings of the Council.

Members of the public shall follow the direction of the presiding officer.

1. **Warning.** Any member of the public who does not follow the direction of the presiding officer will be warned that further disruptive conduct will result in removal from the meeting.
2. **Asked to leave.** After warning, if the conduct continues, the presiding officer may ask the member of the public to leave the meeting room.
3. **Removal.** If the member of the public refuses to follow the direction of the presiding officer, the presiding officer may direct the sergeant-at-arms to remove the person through any lawful means.
4. **Emergency or egregious threat.** In emergency situations, or where conduct is an egregious threat to the safety of the public or the Council, a warning is not necessary before the sergeant-at-arms is directed to remove the person.

Public comment period. A limited period for members of the public to speak with the Council is provided on the agenda. Public comments during the public comment period are subject to these limitations:

1. Speakers must be recognized by the presiding officer before speaking and are limited to three (3) minutes for comment.
2. When multiple speakers appear to speak on the same topic, comments should not be repetitive. The presiding officer may request speakers to appoint a spokesperson.
3. A time limit may be placed on the public comment period if necessary to allow for the conduct of City business.
4. Speakers must sign up prior to speaking and provide a name, address, and brief summary of the subject matter they wish to address. The sign-up sheet will be available at the start of the Council meeting.
5. Speakers must direct their remarks to the presiding officer, not to individual council members, unless responding to a question.
6. Speakers shall not use obscene, profane, or threatening language.
7. Speakers shall not conduct themselves in a threatening, loud, or boisterous manner that disrupts the conduct of the meeting or the security of the public.
8. Speakers must follow the direction of the presiding officer.
9. The Council generally will not respond at the same meeting where an issue is first raised by a member of the public. Matters raised for the first time by members of the public may be referred for further research and possible report or action at a future Council meeting.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

The Council occasionally conducts public hearings to allow the public to offer input on Council decisions.

General procedure for public hearings. The order of business for all public hearings conducted by the Council shall be:

1. Presiding officer announces the purpose of the public hearing.
2. Presiding officer opens the public hearing portion of the meeting.
3. Staff presentation (including department staff, attorney, engineering reports, if any).
4. Applicant/Appellant/Petitioner presentation (if any).
5. Public comments in support or opposition (speakers may be limited in topic or duration).
6. Reading of written comments. Anonymous or unsigned communications will not be read.
7. Presiding officer formally closes the public hearing portion of the meeting. The presiding officer may continue the hearing to another meeting, if necessary.

